

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

What are premenstrual syndrome and premenstrual dysphoric disorder?

PMS is a group of symptoms that happens right before a person gets her monthly period. Many people get PMS, especially mild PMS. When symptoms are severe, doctors call it premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). PMDD is not as common.

What are the symptoms of PMS and PMDD?

PMS and PMDD cause body symptoms as well as changes in mood. The most common symptoms are bloating and feeling tired, angry or worried. Other symptoms can include:

- Feeling sad or hopeless, or crying a lot
- Mood swings
- Trouble concentrating
- Eating more than usual or craving certain foods
- Sleeping too much or having trouble sleeping
- Breast soreness or swelling
- Headaches
- Joint or muscle pain,
- Weight gain

If symptoms are severe, people can have trouble at work, school, or getting along with family and friends.

Is there a test for PMS or PMDD?

No, there is no test for PMS or PMDD, however your clinician should be able to tell you if you have this by talking to you. The clinician will want to know which symptoms you have and when you have them. To get this information, you may be asked to write down your symptoms each day for 2 monthly cycles.

To have PMS or PMDD, you must have symptoms:

- Only 1 to 2 weeks before your period starts, and not during or right after your period
- That affect both your body and mood

Treatment options:

1. *Conservative treatments*: Good evidence shows simple health practices can be effective. Treatments include exercise and relaxation therapy including meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, self-hypnosis, and/or biofeedback. Vitamins and mineral supplements can also be helpful particularly Vitamin B6 (up to 100 mg/day). If you are troubled by bloating then consider avoiding salty foods and large meals if you are bloating.
2. *Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)*: These are medicines commonly used for depression and anxiety. They can also treat PMDD. The most commonly used ones are Prozac/Sarafem and Zoloft/sertraline. Studies show that SSRIs reduce the symptoms of PMDD by 60 to 75%. Sometime people find that taking the SSRI only in the second half of the menstrual cycle is sufficient.
3. *Birth control pills*: Using birth control pills either monthly or continuously can help PMDD. Your clinician can select a birth control pill that is right for you.